

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07

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FM AMEMBASSY ACCRA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1878

INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

AMEMBASSY LAGOS

AMEMBASSY LOME

AMEMBASSY OUAGADOUGOU

C O N F I D E N T I A L ACCRA 0535

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PINS, PGOV, GH

SUBJ: UNIVERSITY STUDENTS BOYCOTT CLASSES BUT MAY RETURN
NEXT WEEK

REF: ACCRA 0370

1. UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN ACCRA (LEGON), KUMASI,
CAPE COAST AND OTHER STUDENTS AT TEACHERS TRAINING
COLLEGE (WINNEBA) AND ELITE MFANTSIPIIM SECONDARY
SCHOOL (CAPE COAST) ARE BOYCOTTING CLASSES AND HAVE
LEFT CAMPUSES TO GO HOME OR LIVE WITH FRIENDS AND
RELATIVES. UNIVERSITIES HAVE EFFECTIVELY BEEN
CLOSED SINCE CLASSES CANNOT BE HELD WITHOUT STUDENTS.
ACTIVISTS FROM NATIONAL UNION OF GHANA STUDENTS
(NUGS) ARE REPORTEDLY PLANING TO STIR UP MORE TROUBLE

WITH POLICE IN COMING WEEKS AND MONTHS.

2. ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS, MFANTSIPIIM SCHOOL,
ALMA MATER OF AMNY OF GHANA'S ELITE AND SCHOOL
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WHICH THEIR CHILDREN NOW ATTEND, WAS CLOSED JANUARY 19
BY CENTRAL REGIONAL COMMISSIONER FOLLOWING STUDENT
CLASHES WITH POLICE. SEVERAL STUDENTS AND A NUMBER
OF POLICEMEN WERE REPORTEDLY INJURED IN DEMONSTRATION
ARISING FROM COMPLAINTS OVER POOR MEALS AND MISMANAGE-
MENT OF SCHOOL AFFAIRS. (COMMENT: WE HAVE HEARD A
GOOD DEAL OF CRITICISM ABOUT WRETCHED FOOD AT SECONDARY

SCHOOLS. WHILE THIS WAS UNDOUBTEDLY A KEY ELEMENT IN STUDENT PROTESTS, THEY MAY ALSO HAVE BEEN DEMONSTRATING TO SHOW SOLIDARITY WITH STUDENTS ELSEWHERE IN GHANA.)

3. ON JANUARY 19 UNIVERSITY COUNCIL (LEGON) RELEASED A CONCILIATORY STATEMENT REQUESTING ALL UNIVERSITY OF GHANA STUDENTS TO RETURN TO CLASSES ON MONDAY, JANUARY 23. COUNCIL EXPRESSED "ITS SYMPATHY TO ALL THOSE WHO MIGHT HAVE BEEN PLACED IN ANY INCONVENIENCE" SINCE JANUARY 13 CLASHES WITH POLICE. COUNCIL FURTHER ASSURED UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY THAT IT WOULD DO EVERYTHING IN ITS POWER TO ENSURE WORK OF UNIVERSITY FOR REST OF SESSION WOULD NOT BE INTERRUPTED IN ANY WAY. WE DO NOT KNOW YET WHETHER STUDENTS WILL ACCEPT OFFER AND GO BACK TO SCHOOL. OUR GUESS IS THAT THEY WILL BEGIN TO DRIBBLE BACK TO CAMPUS NEXT WEEK, IF CLASSES ARE RESUMED.

4. COMMENT: THERE IS A GOOD CHANCE OF MORE STUDENT/ POLICE CONFRONTATIONS BETWEEN NOW AND MARCH 30, WHEN REFERENDUM ON UNION GOVERNMENT WILL BE HELD. NUGS ACTIVISTS AND A LARGE NUMBER OF LESS MILITANT STUDENTS ARE OPPOSED TO PRESENT REGIME AND HEAD OF STATE ACHEAMPONG'S PUTATIVE PLANS TO STAY ON AS PRESIDENT OF A UNION GOVERNMENT. ONE UNCONFIRMED REPORT SAYS ACHEAMPONG WANTS TO CLOSE UNIVERSITIES BEFORE REFERENDUM
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IN ORDER TO DISPERSE STUDENTS, WHO MIGHT OTHERWISE TRY TO DISRUPT VOTING. WE THINK HE IS NOT LIKELY TO TAKE THIS STEP UNLESS THERE ARE MORE DEMONSTRATIONS; BUT IF UNIVERSITIES ARE CLOSED, STUDENTS' POLITICAL EFFECTIVENESS WILL BE GREATLY REDUCED. AS IT IS, THEY ARE AN IRRITANT TO GOG BUT AT THIS POINT LACK THE CAPABILITY TO DO MUCH MORE THAN EMBARRASS REGIME. SMITH

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